

Needham Human Rights Committee Meeting Minutes December 17, 2015

Amelia Klein, co-chair, called the meeting to order at 7:35pm in the conference room of the Broadmeadow School.

Committee members in attendance: Abdul Cader Asmal, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard, Ashok Mehta, Marlene Schultz (co-chair & recorder), Amelia Klein (co-chair) Barry Ehrlich, John Schlitter, NPD liaison.

Committee members absent: Jo-Anne Coffey-McCormick, Zahra Haghighatijoo, Jeremy Sutherland, Bud Shram

1. **Minutes** of the November 19, 2015 NHRC meeting were unanimously approved.
2. **Old Business**
 - a. Based on the new committee handbook, we will have our annual election of officers on May 19, 2016.
 - b. Committee Members: Zahra is not currently able to attend meetings due to illness. She is still interested in our work. A card was sent to her from the committee. We have an opening for a member. Please be on the lookout for others interested in joining with us to do our work.
 - c. Webpage is on hold until Ashok has more time to work on it.
 - d. Education Forum: **Marlene and Amelia** met with AGSA (all genders & sexualities alliance) at the high school to see if they would be interested in co-sponsoring a program with us about *Growing Up Trans*. They were interested in working with us, but would like to see a program that is broader, not limited to transgender. Doug Stanczak, their advisor and history teacher at the high school, felt there needed to be a keynote speaker who is well known. The students suggested Skylar Kergil, a Cambridge based, transgender musician. The students wanted to have breakout sessions that they ran. We discussed the model we used at our Olin College forum where students ran break out sessions. Target audience would be students, parents, faculty and the community. Doug will continue work with the students to plan the program. **Marlene and Amelia** will go back mid-January to see how the planning is progressing. It was felt that the students would need a great deal of help with planning and execution of a forum. Might they partner with Wellesley College students for this? We will ask **Bud** about contacts at Wellesley for this

since he mentioned it at the last meeting. We hope to have a forum in March or April.

3. Reports

Immigration Task Force— Cynthia

- Welcoming Needham— event on Dec. 3. Was once again well received. 30 people from different backgrounds were in attendance.
- Mr. Wu from Chinese Friends of Needham is getting involved in the group. He might be a good contact for us.
- There was a continuing discussion about the possibility of hosting a refugee family in Needham.

Needham Diversity Initiative–

Jennifer reported on the photo exhibit that we have agreed to co-sponsor. They are still trying to figure out the exact focus. Diane Hughes, a local photographer, plans to take photos of families that represent the diversity in Needham. They are working on a questionnaire for the families. They would like to have 30 families represented in the exhibit. Ashok suggested that we have a community dialogue with a discussion about how to be more welcoming to go along with the launch of the exhibit at the library. A number of additional ideas were suggested for Jennifer to take back to the planning committee. The committee includes Rebecca Young from the Diversity Initiative. Barry also suggested a lawn sign about being a welcoming community as a follow up to the photography exhibit.

Jan. 18 MLK Day 2016 event, Rebecca Drill is coordinating the food for the event. NHRC members volunteered to pick up the food once again this year. Jeremy will be hosting the event. They will be showing some videos, have music and dance groups as well. Last year was a success and they are hoping to replicate what was done. **Abdul** will take our poster to display that day.

In March there will be a program based on Colin Stokes video: *White Lies We Tell Our Children*. He can be seen discussing this on a TED talk.

Culture & Climate Committee (CCC) at NHS is having online dialogues with students where they can hear about those who are different. Their goal is to make NHS an even more accepting and supportive learning environment for all students. **Amelia** attended the meeting along with

members of the Diversity Initiative. They met with the NHS principal and two faculty members who lead the Committee.

Town Issues— John

John reported that things were quiet in town. Since he is now the new Chief of Police, we asked about how that might impact his presence at our meetings. He said that they are looking at splitting up community policing and that different officers might rotate through our meetings giving us an opportunity to get to know more of them and giving them the chance to get to know us and our work.

4. New Business:

We decided that we should have a discussion about Muslims late January or early February– a dialogue for the community to come together, learn and ask questions. **Abdul** has agreed to speak and find others to join him in a panel that we hope to hold at The Center on the Heights on a week night 7:30-9:00pm. We thought including a woman on the panel would be a good idea. **Marlene and others** will work with **Abdul** on this. A possible title is: *A Difficult Conversation about Islam*.

As a reminder to the community, in light of what is going on throughout the world, **Barry** will draft a statement from the group about respecting all people. He will circulate a draft via email for comment and edits before submitting it to the newspapers.

5. Other

Upcoming Recordors:

January 21 - Jeremy
February 25 (4th Thursday) - Jennifer
March 17 - Amelia
April 28 (4th Thursday) - Ashok
May 19 - Bud
June 16- Barry Ehrlich

Meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, January 21, 2016 7:30PM.